

To what extent US companies in 2009 inquired through the US Embassy about the investment climate and investment opportunities in Macedonia?

- We have a very busy program of engagement with U.S. businesses, and we spend a lot of time talking with U.S. companies and individuals that have shown interest in learning more about Macedonia.
- This goes back more than a year and is a key element of our strategic partnership. One of Ambassador Reeker's first major projects was to accompany the Prime Minister and members of his Cabinet to Silicon Valley and Chicago in the United States to raise awareness of trade and investment opportunities.
- We also have done outreach through the Business Council for International Understanding at events in Vienna, Washington and New York, as well as supporting efforts through the American Chamber of Commerce. The Ambassador and other members of our team regularly engage with representatives of U.S. companies, on both sides of the Atlantic.
- This is the kind of outreach we do in the context of our Strategic Partnership, and it is an important part of what the Embassy does in Macedonia.

What Macedonia has to do on the economic plan in 2010 to become an attractive business destination for US companies?

- For us, more important than the number of inquiries that we have is what business people are inquiring about. They are basing their decisions on actual conditions.
- They want to know when the name issue will be resolved so that Macedonia will become a member of NATO, and move forward on the path toward EU membership.
- They ask about what it is like to do business in the country – tender procedures, transparency in the judiciary, and whether there is respect for rule of law – both in government and generally, whether there is a culture of rule of law.
- Basically they want to know: What are the risk factors, the moral hazards, the political risks? Will there be a level playing field?
- Rule of law is particularly important -- American business people have to adhere to the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.
- As we emerge from recession, competition for investment dollars will remain tight, including right here in the region where a number of Macedonia's neighbors are working to be equally competitive. Macedonia will not only need to show progress on all these fronts,. That will be a challenge, but we think Macedonia can meet that challenge.